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## INTELLIGENCE IN RECENT PUBLIC LITERATURE

### Traitors

THE NEW MEANING OF TREASON By *Rebecca West* (New York: Viking, 1964, 374 pp., \$6.95)

TREASON IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY By *Margaret Boveri* Translated from the German (Hamburg, 1956) by Jonathan Steinberg\* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1963, 370 pp., \$5.95)

These two books cover roughly the same subject matter—treason and espionage in World War II and the postwar period. Both are thoughtful and scholarly and obviously required a great deal of research, which on the whole appears to have been most carefully done. Both try through detailed and extensive analyses of episodes they class as treachery to evolve a thesis of philosophical concepts which have general application, and here I believe both fail.

In her earlier book on *The Meaning of Treason* (1947) Miss West presented a good deal of the same material but came to a quite different conclusion. In effect, she said that the high development of modern civilization impairs the relationship between the citizen and the state and that loyalty to country is no longer the simple and clear-cut bond it once was. Now she has expanded and updated her discussion of William Joyce, the wartime Lord Haw Haw of Radio Berlin, and added more recent cases, notably those involving Burgess and Maclean, Vassall, Abel, the Rosenbergs, and Fr. Fama, laying particular emphasis on the security aspects, and she concludes that in today's world there is a pervasive and expanding espionage effort met by an equally widespread and expanding counter-espionage effort. While recognizing the national need for security, she dwells at some length on the dangers that security and countersecurity activity poses to our societies and warns us to balance security requirements with a determination to preserve our liberties.

The German author, Miss Boveri, argues a change in the nature of loyalties since the days of feudalism, pointing out that with the French Revolution the simple allegiance of vassal to lord began to break down and be replaced by the more complicated obligations of a citizen in the developing democratic states. As an example of

\* See bibliographical note p. 98

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the feudal practice she notes the soldier's oath required by the King of Prussia as late as 1831. Clearly inconsistent with this thesis is her own observation that the oath of personal loyalty which Hitler required of all German officers was one of the main inhibitions to their active participation in the 20 July 1944 plot against him.

In developing her thesis Miss Boveri uses a remarkable collection of examples. One of the first is Vidkun Quisling, who incidentally bears a strong resemblance to William Joyce. He is followed by such figures as King Leopold of Belgium, Marshal Petain, Admiral Darlan, and Laval. She then mixes in Joyce, Ezra Pound, Tokyo Rose, and Knut Hamsun. Next she treats at length the opposition to Hitler by the various German groups from the old conservatives like General Beck through the curious combination of people involved in "Bote Kapelle" and on to Stauffenberg. Finally she mentions rather briefly such cases as those of Rudolf Rossler (the "Lucy" of Alexander Foote's net) and Otto John.

She claims to be able to see a common thread running through all these diverse types, but I find the argument unconvincing. It is difficult to see the tie between a despicable William Joyce and Stauffenberg, or between the patriot Rossler and Ezra Pound. As, in general, espionage cases like that of Colonel Abel cannot be classed as treason. The detailed studies of all these people in both books seem to me to be not susceptible of the authors' interpretations but rather to lead to the conclusion that

The wrong is noted. In tragic life, God wot,  
No villain rears his head. Passions spin the plot  
We are betrayed by what is false within.<sup>1</sup>

Another book on Lord Haw-Haw appeared in 1964, written by J. A. Cole.<sup>2</sup> It covers the same ground Miss West did and expands particularly on Joyce's activities in Germany and his personal life. (Curiously, it does not credit or even refer to her work, although some of its passages are so like hers as to suggest familiarity with it.) Is William Joyce worth all this effort? Perhaps the British, on whom his broadcasts had such an impact during the war, find the subject fascinating, but for me, well written as these books are, they do not make a major figure out of him. Both authors show a surprising

<sup>1</sup> George Meredith, *Modern Love*, XLIII.

<sup>2</sup> *Lord Haw-Haw and William Joyce: The Full Story* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$4.95.)

*Recent Books: Traitors*

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sympathy for their anti-hero, whose behavior manifested few redeeming features except a certain amount of rough courage and a perverse sentimentality about England

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